

The Philippines: Status of the Ceasefire Talks

Representatives of the Communist Party's National Democratic Front announced last Saturday that they would present to government negotiators this week a proposal for an immediate 30-day ceasefire. The NDF press release indicated that the proposal would include the creation of jointly-staffed national and regional committees to monitor the ceasefire and arbitrate disputes. Agriculture Minister Ramon Mitra, the government's chief negotiator, told the press on Monday that an agreement was expected the within a day or two.

NDF

30-day
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On Monday night, Philippine Constabulary units in Manila arrested Rodolfo Salas--who until last spring was Communist Party Chairman; his wife; and a Salas aide. NDF officials immediately accused the military of arresting Salas--who they claimed was a member of the negotiating team--in order to sabotage the peace talks and demanded the release of all three detainees. Military officials denied that Salas was attached to the NDF negotiating team. NDF officials criticized Mitra for announcing that an agreement was imminent without having formally received the NDF proposal. In addition, they denied that a meeting with Mitra was scheduled.

Arrest

We have little information as of yet on the circumstances of Salas's arrest. However, we cannot rule out the possibility that it was a deliberate provocation by the military to derail the talks. Aquino and Mitra have yet to make public statements on Salas's arrest or on the status of the NDF's ceasefire proposal.

Derail

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